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With the respects of Pat Birkhead
Baltimore

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

READING ROOM SOCIETY

OF

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,

ON THE

Twenty-second of February, 1841.

By HARRY T. HAYS,
OF MISSISSIPPI.

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY JOHN MURPHY,
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WASHINGTON, D.C.

FEBRUARY 22, 1841.

Dear Sir:

We offer you many thanks for the kindness with which you have complied with our request to deliver before the READING ROOM SOCIETY an Address on the birth-day of the Father of our country.

We cannot give you a better proof of the opinion we have of the ability with which it was delivered, and of the impression which it made on the minds of your hearers, than to say, that we are commissioned by the unanimous voice of the Society to request that you would favor us with a copy of it for publication.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN H. THOMAS,
WM. C. SHAW, Jr.
B. RODRIGUEZ,
H. DESOBRY,
} *Committee.*

TO THE COMMITTEE.

FEBRUARY 23, 1841.

Gentlemen:

In furnishing you with a copy of the Address delivered yesterday, I take this opportunity of returning through you, to the Society which you represent, my sincere thanks for the honors which they have chosen to confer upon me.

I am, gentlemen, with sincere regard,

Your obedient servant,

HARRY T. HAYS.

ADDRESS.

Gentlemen and Fellow Students:

In accepting the pleasing task which your kindness has imposed upon me, I cannot but feel embarrassed, from a deep sense of my inability to address you in a manner suitable to so august an occasion, or adequately expressive of the feelings which it is so eminently calculated to inspire. The practice of celebrating this day in a particular manner, has been sanctioned by the unanimous voice of the American people; nor need I undertake to show you that such celebrations tend to perpetuate a familiar knowledge of the means by which our country was erected into a republic; to inspire us with a true love of liberty and a jealous care of our republican institutions. Festive days in honor of heroes have been celebrated by all nations and throughout all ages, and the fruits arising from their observance are manifold and rich. They carry us back to the days on which the glorious deeds which we celebrate were performed. The virtues which time in its rapid march, perhaps in some degree shrouded in the mists of the past, are brought fresh to our memory. Our souls hold communion with the best spirits of other days; we catch the impulse which stimulated them to deeds of worth, and resolve to imitate the nobleness of their example.

Glancing at the records of the past, we behold, in the warmth of our admiration, innumerable examples of the statesman and soldier crowned with honor and trumpeted by fame; but history does not produce a single example of a subject so worthy the gratitude and honors of his countrymen, or of mankind at large, as the individual whose virtues we are this day assembled to commemorate. The name of Washington has gone forth to every nation; his virtues have become the theme of every tongue, and in his life all may find a model for fearless and proud imitation. No longer are his countrymen permitted to claim him as their exclusive property. His character is the common

inheritance of all mankind. Have we not then reason to rejoice, gentlemen, that it was our own beloved country which gave birth to a man whose fame has rolled even beyond the limits of civilization? that it was for our sake that these almost super-human virtues were exercised? Where is the American whose bosom beats with the transports of patriotism, who will not with rapture avow that he has many causes to rejoice, that his is the proud prerogative of being styled the son of WASHINGTON? Our gratitude, great as it may be, must necessarily fall far short of his real merit. He gave us the most valuable treasure that a nation can possess. He gave us that for the attainment of which thousands of heroes have poured out their blood; that which millions have desired, but few have dared to assert, and fewer still have obtained. In a word, he gave us our freedom; he gave us a republic which has stood whilst thrones have been overturned, sceptres broken and empires prostrated in the dust; a republic whose star-spangled banner floats triumphant over sea and land, whose dominion extends from the Northern Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico—from the Atlantic to the far Pacific. Yes, gentlemen, this country which less than a century ago, was but an humble colony of England, can now vie with that proud people in the ubiquity of their commerce, and the glory, if not the usurpation of their arms. In our ports we are struck with the beauty of the prospect. Our bays are chequered with the vessels of all the civilized nations of the earth; their sails whiten our waters and their unfurled flags sport with delight in the breeze which is wafted from the shores of a happy and independent people. Through every sea

> "Our merchant now pursues his gain,
> And roams securely over the boundless main."

I may revert for a moment to the glory of our arms, and the more gladly, because it is a glory not won by invasion nor by conquest, but by resistance upon our own soil, as brave men in a righteous cause. The theme has been familiar to us since our childhood. Often has "narrative old age" beguiled the tedious hours of a winter eve by recounting to an infantine group, the exploits and the triumphs of their worthy sires. Those heroes who have lingered are fast departing from amongst us, but their memories shall not sink with them into the silent tomb. Annu-

ally shall we assemble to proclaim to an admiring world, the bravery of that immortal phalanx; annually, hand in hand shall we approach the consecrated altars of Liberty to lay thereon our hallowed offerings. As each returning year ushers in this festive morn, spreading before our fancy the historic virtues of the great and good, our hearts glowing with enthusiastic emotions, shall swell the joyous outbursts of a nation's gratitude and make the air resound with the sainted name of WASHINGTON. To all the world we shall pass as our watchword the name of him, who towering far above the boldest leader of any Macedonian cohort, is proclaimed in simple, but comprehensive praise,—"first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Never can we sufficiently admire WASHINGTON's bravery and skill in battle, his wisdom and prudence in council, or his devoted and unflinching patriotism whether in war or peace. When the dark cloud of the revolution overshadowed our country; when war desolated the fairest portions of her soil, and drenched her fields in blood; when her hardy yeomanry, trembling for the liberty, which they ever guarded with jealousy, left the peaceful ploughshare to meet the invading foe and repel him from their shores; then it was that a man of bravery, prudence and wisdom, was required to lead them to the assault, and direct the force of their arms. The period was a fearful one. It was easily foreseen that the struggle would be long and bloody. The enemy had all the requisites for a protracted contest, whilst our brave ancestors were utterly destitute. No arms had they—no ammunition—no regular drilled forces; in fine, nothing but the will and determination "to do or die." At this doubtful crisis, when the prayers of desponding thousands reached the ear of Omnipotence, a heated fancy might almost imagine, that the Angel of Liberty, descended through the clouds which overhung our horizon and placed the wreath upon the brow of our WASHINGTON, bidding the heaven-guided hero to battle in the just cause of his country, trusting in the indignation of a young but gigantic people, led on to victory by the God of Battles. Then it was that hurling our memorable declaration at the tyrants who would have ground us to the dust, our illustrious hero summoned the oppressors to the arbitrament of our wrongs, and the full and triumphant overthrow of British domination, struck down the abuses of the past and placed upon an immoveable foundation

the inalienable rights of man. It is not my intention to recount the various fortunes, trials and difficulties attending our great struggle for independence. The rehearsal of these sublime, but sometimes doleful scenes, is unnecessary. The history of our country tells us, that WASHINGTON was the soul of the revolution; that its darkest periods could not depress his spirit or unnerve his energy; and that the result upon which depended the happiness or misery of millions, was owing to his undaunted courage, prompt skill and unerring judgment. Numerous and striking examples might be adduced, illustrative of WASHINGTON's military character, his patience, his foresight, his fortitude and greatness of soul. It will suffice however to allude to the battle of Trenton, inasmuch as the circumstances which surrounded and accompanied it, placed it high, as an achievement, over the most brilliant struggles of numbers and chivalry. This victory obtained after so many hardships, difficulties and dangers, seemed to give a fresh impulse to the dying energies of the revolution, and WASHINGTON then saw through the mist which obscured our liberties, a light in heaven prognosticating by its brilliancy, the future glory and power of his country. When we consider the deserted and hopeless condition to which the American army was reduced on that occasion; when we picture to ourselves that gallant little band of half-starved and half-naked soldiers, at the dark hour of midnight contending with the ice of the Delaware and the fury of the heavens, which poured upon them their mingled volumes of snow, hail and rain—then marching barefoot upon the cold and frozen ground to drive a haughty foe from his place of imagined security, our hearts are filled with sentiments of the deepest respect and veneration, for those who thus freely braved the greatest perils to secure their country's freedom, and for the mighty spirit which directed and sustained their zeal and valor. It is almost impossible to trace their noble deeds of daring and the perseverance with which they followed their leader, as HE, at one time, encourages their sad hearts with words of consolation; at another stands between them and the uplifted weapon of his enemy—now stopping to administer the last solace to the expiring patriot, now flying to the rescue of his friends and disputing every inch of ground which fair freedom claims as her own.

I need not recount to you the thrilling incidents of Princeton,

Monmouth and Brandywine; nor need I conduct you in imagination through the blood-stained field, that you may yourselves hear the din of war and the clash of arms. All this you have learned from grateful tradition and the faithful pen of the historian. Peace now stretches her pinions over our happy land. Our Hero led us to the field of Yorktown, where the blood of the brave sealed our independence. He dispelled the cloud that darkened every prospect and struck off the fetters from the arms of the sons of liberty. All is peace! No more do you hear the terrific war-whoop. No longer do you see "the savage hell-hounds of horrid war," urged on by their scarcely less unfeeling, though christian allies, raise in their vengeance, the fatal tomahawk over the heads of the unoffending wife and infant. Yes, our land is free—

> "From end to end, from cliff to lake 'tis free!
> Free as our torrents are that leap our rocks,
> And plough our valleys, without asking leave;
> Or as our peaks that wear their caps of snow,
> In very presence of the regal sun!"

But, gentlemen, in discharging the duties of this day, let us pay a passing tribute of respect to the memory of those whose lot it was to fall, ere they saw the sun of liberty shedding its brilliant light over America, for they claim union of hearts with their commander. Illustrious men! though an untimely death prevented you from beholding the picture of happiness, one day to be enjoyed by your more fortunate companions, still you live in our hearts, and your names will be handed down with reverence to an admiring posterity. Yes, you will live in our hearts, and your actions and virtues will never cease to claim from all Americans a grateful remembrance. Bunker Hill and Saratoga, Camden and Eutaw, Yorktown and the Cowpens, will always recall by the mention of them, thoughts of the good men and true, who went there to an untimely rest, and of the days in which the very youth, whose strength was scarcely equal to the task of handling the musket, swore by the patriotic blood which flowed from the wounds of those veterans, to avenge the wrongs of Liberty and of themselves. They died, but their last words were the words of freemen—encouraging, ere they sunk into their eternal sleep, their friends who surrounded them, to go on

and battle in their country's cause. Their last breath was spent in humble supplications to the throne of mercy, for a successful issue. Heaven proved propitious, and smiled on the virtuous efforts of WASHINGTON and the brilliant constellation of heroes that remained. Success crowned their glorious undertaking, and tyranny was humbled. Then it was that the American eagle soared triumphant; then were we called upon to love our country, because she had gained what was worthy of our love.

There is something so grateful in the duty of rendering justice to the memory of good men, whose lights were extinguished in the blood of the battle-field, where they stood firm for the right, that I might go on, connecting with the praise of WASHINGTON, homage to his departed associates. But it is unnecessary to follow him and them farther in their military career. Already have we seen our little bark ride triumphant o'er the billows of the stormy ocean, and bid defiance to England's prowess. We have seen our gallant leader spurn her power, and raise in triumph the standard of liberty—the idol of every just man's heart. Let us now view him in the character of a statesman. Here we are at once struck with his devotion to the interest, the union and the harmony of the youthful republic. His active and untiring discharge of all the duties imposed upon him by his country; his tender care for her future happiness and prosperity; and above all, the bright and unaffected examples which he has left of the impartiality with which he administered justice to all, are too deeply impressed upon the memory of his grateful sons, to be ever forgotten. Indeed, the course which he pursued in his political life could not fail to command and win the confidence of his countrymen. His actions were ever open to scrutiny; and as no fear of censure could prevent him from publishing his opinions, so likewise no measures were ever proposed by him, with the view of serving any party purpose, but from a deep conviction that they were sound in principle and were calculated to promote the true and lasting welfare of his country. Throughout his whole political career, his course was characterized by a decided, independent and manly tone. His countrymen could not mistake his views. They trusted to the sincerity of his motives and the vigor of his judgment; his final decisions always bearing the impress of consummate prudence. After having thus served his country for forty-five years, in the capacity both of a

soldier and a statesman, with an unblemished character, he sought in the bosom of his family, that sweet repose which he had so long desired, but which his patriotism had not yet permitted him to enjoy. And even to his residence upon his own beloved Mount Vernon, he was followed by all the gratitude, veneration and love, that a devoted country could bestow on one of whom she was so justly proud, and whom she loaded with all her honors. If we accompany WASHINGTON to his retirement, we shall not find less to admire in his private than in his public life. If in the one he was firm, untiring and independent, in the other he was affable, courteous and dignified. As the head of a family, he was mild and affectionate; as a friend, true and faithful; and to his many other brilliant qualities we may add, that he was a christian—fervent without fanaticism, and illustrating his principles by his practice. Such were the qualities constituting the greatness of that illustrious man—the most illustrious, unquestionably, who ever did exist, and of whom, perhaps, it has been as truly as beautifully said by a writer: "That nature threw away the mould in which she made her WASHINGTON." Gentlemen, all that was perishable of our WASHINGTON has long since shared the common lot of man, and his unsullied spirit has winged its way to the mansions of reward and repose. Not content with bequeathing to us his virtues and his fame as a legacy, ever remembered and ever instructive, his patriotism induced him to leave behind him a written transcript of his wisdom. To that as to the enduring echo of a mighty voice which is silent, statesmen of all nations and of all times to come, may hearken with pleasure and instruction. Among the many salutary counsels which he has left in that sacred legacy, there is none which he would have more lastingly impressed upon our minds, than the great importance of the national union to the permanent happiness of the republic. The union he has represented as the solid foundation upon which rests our prosperity, our happiness and our liberty. Separate the North from the South—the East from the West, and the proud fabric which liberty has erected, must crumble to the dust, and in its stead will rise the gorgon horror of despotism. A government founded upon principles similar to ours, and extending over a tract of territory so immense, must have all its parts closely linked together; it must stand firm and unshaken by the winds of jea-

lousy, or the country which it is designed to bless must fall from the eminent condition in which you now behold her, and give room for the enemies of free principles to rejoice at her overthrow and scoff at the ignorance of her rulers. Nor, gentlemen, were the ever watchful eyes of WASHINGTON closed even to the future storms that might darken her prospects. He scanned the various clouds which overhung her, and wept to see that party spirit might prove her greatest enemy; that it might ruffle the ocean as yet calm, and dash upon its roaring surge the bark of Liberty, perhaps to destruction. How far these predictions have been verified, you, gentlemen, can see; yes, and see too with emotions too deep to be described. You have but to lament the past and dread the future.

What mean these crowds that continually throng our streets? What their shouts and acclamations? Gentlemen, they are the demons of America; they are the harbingers of her disunion, of her destruction. They are raising unawares, the axe which must finally give the deadly blow to their country, by causing the bonds of friendship and feelings of brotherly love to be severed and trampled under foot by party spirit. But it may be said these are the shouts of exultation from a true and patriotic spirit, which burns within the bosoms of our citizens. Would that it were so! Would that their shouts were those of a free and victorious people exulting in the downfall of foes. But, gentlemen, they are actuated by other motives; they are hurried on by love of gain; they are grasping at laurels, not green but golden; at offices, not praise; at the pillage of the camp, instead of the glory of triumph. Let us cease to waste our strength in our own destruction; let us look abroad on the distant shores of the Atlantic, and find a subject of warning. Cast your eye on England. Can your gaze rest upon that haughty power with forgetfulness of her constant aggressions? See with what contempt she spurns our power and tramples under foot our sovereign rights. See the flames of the Caroline ascending towards the heavens, and listen to the groans of our dying citizens. Is this a sight to meet the eyes of freemen? Is it a sight on which we should gaze with a mild countenance and a heart unheated by the desire of redress? No, gentlemen, it is not. The course of England is fast passing the bounds of toleration. It must be checked, or the very heart of our country has reason to tremble.

In direct opposition to all right, she has one hand on California—the other on the Oregon territory. She styles herself the mistress of the seas, and claims it as her regal prerogative to search our vessels on the coast of Africa. She has even dared to take and set free our slaves cast by tempests on the shores of Bermuda; she is now endeavoring to introduce the cotton trade into the East Indies, to the prejudice of our southern planters. And what are her motives for thus acting? They are to crush our power and grasp at our resources as her prey, when she shall imagine success beyond a doubt. How long are we to suffer this? Do we wait for new aggressions? We have now sufficient cause to feel that it becomes us to be united—in fact, the voice of prudence demands it. So long as we can with honor preserve peace, let us do so. But when the honor of our country demands our arms, we should hearken to her call, and spurn that spirit of party prejudice which would close our ears against it.

Among other topics recommended to our consideration, WASHINGTON has inculcated in the strongest language, the diffusion of general knowledge—a subject, fellow-students, which elicits your most serious attention, especially in the stage of life through which you are now passing. You may, some of you, be called to the arduous yet honorable duty, of legislation; all of you, at any rate, must take part in the choice of your rulers. Lay now a solid foundation in science, upon which you may hereafter erect wise and just laws to guide your country and build up your own fame and fortune. Bear in mind that those who now stand first in our government, and whose sole thought should be its welfare, must pass away. They must leave their country to you, when they set out on the inevitable voyage to another. Who will then direct our state? Fellow-students, they gaze on you. They look upon the educated youth of this country as those who are to fill their stations when they are no more; as those who are to guide their country safely and quietly, preserving our liberty and following the example of him who gave it to us. Let not their just hopes be blasted, and remember, in the cultivation of your minds and hearts, that you have a bright destiny in your own hands.

One word before concluding.—It is a matter of no little regret that the bones of the illustrious WASHINGTON should be suffered

to remain in the obscure place in which they now lie. Not long since we regarded with unfeigned interest, the removal of the remains of Napoleon from the island of St. Helena. A feeling of pride seemed to pervade our bosoms when reading of the joy of the French at again beholding their long lost emperor, and the enthusiasm of the guard which tore away the pall that covered the body of their beloved general. Well did Louis Philippe know, that the barren isle of St.Helena was too small to contain the relics of a hero, whose march all Europe could scarce resist; and with an impulse, perhaps founded upon policy, he resolved to accord a new tomb and funeral honors to France's only emperor. What has been the result? Millions of Frenchmen now yield to Louis a homage which they never would otherwise have paid him, and prayers without number ascend to the throne of heaven in behalf of the citizen king. In this act of the French there is certainly nothing exceptionable. For although Napoleon may have been, in the opinion of some, an usurper and a tyrant; and although he sought only to gratify his own ambition, reckless of the ruin and desolation that followed—still was he that mighty genius who made France what she was—the terror of the world. It was he who at the head of her armies, conquered nations, disposed of crowns and left a record of her greatness for ever to the continent which trembled and smarted under his sway.

But if Napoleon be deserving of a people's remembrance and admiration, what is not due to that man, who was as far above Napoleon as the sun is above the earth? In WASHINGTON are found combined, the qualities of the general, the statesman and the christian—the mind and the heart cultivated and developed in beautiful parallel and proportion. He gave honor to the United States, to the people freedom and happiness. Napoleon acquired glory for the French name and extended the boundaries of his empire; but his march was marked out by the smoking ruins of nations and cursed by the conscripts whom he had dragged from their peaceful homes, to be played with as the "bloody dice" of his unhallowed game; the proudest monuments of the arts and sciences were crushed or pillaged before his triumphant standard; and the shrieks of helpless thousands published to the world the story of their wrongs and his oppression. It was his downfall, not his will, which restored the spoils to the

rightful owners, and gave the fettered nations an opportunity to burst the bonds, which as a conqueror he had riveted upon them. The American gave liberty to his country, and extended its limits so that two oceans wash its shores; yet in the accomplishment of all this, he gained the admiration of nations, both for his honor and his justice. His footsteps were followed by gladness, for he came to deliver, not to destroy. His path was that of the sunbeam, which lights and fructifies and blesses, not that of the lightning which glares but to consume. His death in the midst of his country's love, cemented more firmly the union to which he had given existence, and though he loosed the bonds of no other people, he set a glorious example to the oppressed. Great in his public career, great in the private walks of life, in every action the philanthropist and the patriot, he died as he had lived —his light sinking behind the horizon, but not extinguished. Such then, are the leading characteristics of these two men. The French have deemed their chieftain worthy of the greatest honors. Will not the sons of America manifest their gratitude also? The name of WASHINGTON is indeed engraved in indelible characters on the heart of every true American; and it can never be effaced: but still a visible monument should be erected to his honor. Let us hope that ere long the good people of this country will exert themselves for the promotion of this design. For him and his name it can do nothing. Time, when he lays his hand upon the marble which will crumble beneath his touch, will drop his scythe from the vain labor of cutting down the remembrance of the virtues which make the marble holy. To ourselves, however, we owe it as a nation, that the capital which bears the name of Washington, should be consecrated by a testimonial of our gratitude and reverence. Let the vigorous hand of our republic gather the stones of a pyramid together, and over the ashes of her Father—"let it rise; let it meet the sun in his coming; let the first rays of morning gild it, and parting day linger and play on its summit."

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